

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 017405

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, OGEN, NP

SUBJECT: PERMIT TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST -- REVEREND FORD

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 269 (B) KATHMANDU 125

1. DEPARTMENT CALLED IN NEPALI SECOND SECRETARY JANUARY 21 TO CLARIFY USG POSITION CONCERNING REVEREND FORD'S APPLICATION, AND HIS RECENT CABLES TO GON. AFTER SHARING SUBSTANCE OF REFTELS, WHICH NEPALIS HERE HAD NOT RECEIVED FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT, WE REITERATED POINT MADE BY FISCHER TO PANDE (REF A) THAT USG ENDORSEMENT OF FORD'S APPLICATION WAS PURELY TECHNICAL AND LIMITED TO MINIMUM REQUIREMENT OF NEPALESE REGULATIONS.

2. WE EXPRESSED EMBARRASSMENT ABOUT CRITICISM OF HMG BY FORD, BUT MADE CLEAR THAT WE SHOULD IN NO WAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH REVEREND FORD'S MESSAGES. WE EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS OF COURSE ENTIRELY UP TO HMG ON BASIS ITS EVALUATION TO DECIDE WHETHER IN LIGHT OF ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WISHES TO GRANT OR DENY A LICENSE AND WE WOULD NATURALLY ACCEPT WHATEVER ACTION HMG TOOK.

3. AS WE UNDERSTAND STATE OF PLAY, GON INTENDS TO WITHDRAW FORD'S CONDITIONAL APPROVAL AND GRANT EXCLUSIVE PERMIT
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TO TRIMBLE PARTY AT END OF JANUARY IF FORD HAS NOT COME UP WITH FULL BIO PARTICULARS ON FOUR OR FIVE ADDITIONAL COMPETENT AMERICAN CLIMBERS BY THAT TIME. PLEASE ADVISE IF OUR UNDERSTANDING IS CORRECT, AND WHETHER GON INTENDS TO ASK FOR NEW ENDORSEMENT FOR GROUP APPLICATION BY FORD.

4. FYI: DEPARTMENT CALLED PRESIDENT OF ALASKA ALPINE CLUB JANUARY 21 TO INFORM HER OF NEPALI REACTION TO REVEREND FORD'S CABLES AND SEEK FURTHER BACKGROUND ON CLUB'S ENDORSEMENT OF HIS APPLICATION IN LIGHT OF FORD'S MESSAGES. SHE STATED THAT CLUB MEMBER WHO HANDLED FORD'S ENDORSEMENT IS CURRENTLY ON EXPEDITION IN ANTARCTICA AND CANNOT BE REACHED. SHE IS NOT WELL-ACQUAINTED WITH REVEREND FORD BUT EXPLAINED THAT CLUB'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHY IS THAT CLIMBING IS A MATTER BETWEEN THE PERSON AND THE MOUNTAIN, AND IF AN INDIVIDUAL WISHES TO RISK HIS LIFE, THAT IS HIS BUSINESS. IN VIEW OF THIS AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, KUX HAS CALLED PUTNAM OF AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB TO RESPOND TO LETTER AND MEND FENCES SOMEWHAT. END FYI.

5. REVEREND FORD HAS STILL NOT CONTACTED US, AND WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT HIM BY PHONE TO INFORM HIM OF NEPALI CONDITIONS PARA 6 REF A OR THEIR REACTION TO HIS CABLES. HAS GON CABLED HIM DIRECT? SISCO

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